

*“Lighthouses don’t go running all over an island looking for boats to save; they just stand there shining.”*  
— Anne Lamott

# Student Activists Under Fire

Southern Oregon University Students Face Controversy Following DC Arrests

By Jason Houk

On March 26, students from Southern Oregon University joined over three hundred students from across the country for a march in Washington DC on Sallie Mae offices to protest student debt and lobby for more affordable education. Protesters blocked streets and demanded a meeting with the student loan giant CEO, Albert Lord. After being kicked out of the building, Sallie Mae called the police which resulted in the arrest of 36 students.

The protests were organized by the Student Labor Action Project (SLAP), a joint project of Jobs with Justice and United States Student Association. These groups organized the downtown action as part of their on-going campaign for student debt forgiveness. The action was planned around the time that national student debt was about to climb past one trillion dollars, making it the largest form of debt in the country. Student loan debt now exceeds credit card debt in this country. The average student graduates with \$25,000 in loans nationally, at a time when one out of every two college graduates is jobless or underemployed. Students were hopeful about talking to an employee of Sallie Mae about this growing problem but instead found themselves having to talk to police.

“Every six minutes, another million dollars is added to the national student debt average. This is the reality that my friends are facing, my little brother in college is facing, and that students around the country are up against” said Chris Hicks, the National Student Labor Action Project Coordinator. “We know the odds aren’t on our side. Unemployment for young people is at a record high, the amount of debt we have is at a record high, but I came here with 300 other students to demand change and will not stop until we win free higher education for anyone who wants it”

Oregon students from across the state participated in the actions. In a statement by Oregon State Student Association: “Oregon Students along with the United States Student Association and students from around the country in the National Student Lobby Day protested Sallie Mae and student loan debt today while also lobbying Congress for more affordable and accessible education. They shut



36 students were arrested in recent non-violent demonstrations. Photo via SLAP

down 7th street in NW DC today for hours. Students chanted “Sallie Mae, you can’t hide, we can see your greedy side.” “No cuts, no fees, education should be free!” We are glad all the Oregon students are safe and on their way home soon after 36 students were arrested in the protest.”

Southern Oregon students Shaun Franks and Hannah Howell were among those arrested. Each was charged \$50 for blocking an entrance but neither has been charged with a crime.

Since returning to Ashland, the SOU students have been under scrutiny for their participation in the action. Franks has been under investigation for his role and worried that his position as director of sustainability for SOU’s student government may be threatened.

There is a local activist campaign to encourage community members to contact the university and insist Franks not be punished.

Ashland Free Press has not received an official word on sanctions but Jonathan Eldridge VP of Student Affairs, has downplayed the possibility of severe action against Franks. “You are correct that Mr. Franks will not be removed from his position with student government—at least not by SOU officials,” stated Eldridge, “I can’t speak for AS-SOU itself.”

Eldridge explains, “All along, we have simply wanted to speak with him and the other student who chose to get arrested, in order to fully understand how that decision was made in relation to the behavior they committed to when signing on to travel under the University’s name.”

“It is fascinating how this entire episode has been blown so out of proportion.” Laments Eldridge.

“Since they may want to travel again for University-related reasons we want to be clear on expectations. That’s all. This has never been about punishing them, despite what some have claimed in the press and elsewhere.” Eldridge said.



# A Time Out for Poverty

By Vanessa Houk

As the weather begins to warm up in the Rogue Valley and the red Shakespeare flags flap gently in the warm breeze signaling tourist season is upon us, two things seem to happen as if almost mechanically. The Jackson County Sheriff’s Department begins to do homeless “sweeps” in the greenway and Ashland’s city council tries to hash out an “exclusion zone” ordinance for the downtown plaza. Once again this spring, Ashland city councilors carefully attempted to tone down the language of the proposed law, calling it a “time out” which they say would be used for a few identifiable people who have previous criminal records.

Our city council voted almost unanimously for an exclusion zone policy with Carol Voisin being the lone “No” vote. They asked Chief Holderness to craft an ordinance which will soon be submitted to the council for approval. It is not yet clear which specific behaviors will be targeted and if downtown bar patrons could be affected considering that alcohol plays a big role in bad behavior regardless of one’s property status. At the same city council meeting on April 3, police chief Holderness stated there was more than a 22% increase in crime in Ashland in 2011 and that three individuals were responsible for that spike in what was mostly property crimes. It was also reported that one of those three people are homeless and one is serving time in an Oregon state prison. During the comment section of the meeting Ashland resident Sarah Withers said that a man tried to break into her house in the middle of the night just a few days before. She felt threatened and called 911. The police came and it was found that the man was “extremely drunk and unaware of his surroundings.”

Ms Withers when on to explain that, “the police informed Ms. Withers this type of encounter happened frequently in Ashland. They did not arrest the individual but transported him to detox who released him two hours later.” This is one example of the types of crimes in Ashland which are committed by people who are not homeless, who would not be targeted by an exclusion zone and who represent a real problem to Ashland residents.

All of this begs the question of when does a homeless person give her his or her constitutional right to due process? Why does the city need an exclusion zone to presumably keep out those three “worst offenders” (while only one of the three is homeless) instead of using laws which are already on the books including but not limited to restraining orders? When did Ashland Oregon ratify the Constitution of the United States so that democracy is only promised to those who are homed?

“We’re fighting for our economic survival,” said Lemhouse. “If we don’t deal with negative behavior downtown, tourists may stop coming here.”

It seems that an exclusion zone is coming down the pike.

Those of us who recognize that signaling out anyone based on his or her past actions and kicking them out of a public space is an outrageous violation of civil rights, can be prepared to spend time on the plaza this summer, video cameras in hand so that we can document such abuses for the court proceedings that will surely follow. How many tourists will avoid visiting a city that unfairly and unjustly targets any group of people based on the whims of a few? Ashlanders will have a front row seat in the farce that is unfolding.

# H<sup>3</sup> - Inspiring a Call to Action

By Vanessa Houk

By the time this issue hits the streets there will probably be several donation boxes for the homeless in the downtown area. While the city does not impose any ordinances against panhandling, these donation boxes are a way for the Chamber of Commerce to try to discourage tourists from handing money directly to someone who is homeless. The money collected will go to St. Vincent de Paul and critics say that the money presumably collected for Ashland’s homeless will go to help people who are on the verge of homelessness rather than be used to lift people off the streets.

As a reaction to that we have decided to offer copies of the Ashland Free Press to some of our homeless folks so that they can offer copies of AFP to tourists and solicit donations. Many other cities across the US have street papers which are used to fund homeless services and we have always been open to the idea of sharing the Free Press to help others both by publishing the stories behind the issues and in a much more direct way. AFP is not “Ashland’s homeless paper”, but will continue to be a publication that views the valley through a social justice lens and homelessness is, of course, a big part of that story.

When we sit still long enough to write the Ashland Free Press, I am always amazed at the sheer number of social justice causes that are active here in the Rogue Valley. Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice, Oregon Action and other groups are working on a campaign for health care for all Oregonians. Readers might recall the Vermont Worker’s Tour last year and that there is a grassroots movement to bring single-payer health care, that is a system that boots the insurance companies out of health care and instead builds a taxpayer funded system which covers medical, mental and dental care for all Oregon residents, a system which would

save 30-50% off the costs of healthcare. As Wes Brain says “Oregon is not reinventing the wheel. In fact we are going to follow Vermont’s example and we’re going to see this happen here.” To join the campaign to bring health care to all Oregonians, email brain@mind.net.

We are already thinking of this issue as H3, Homelessness, Healthcare and Higher Education. We believe everyone, regardless of income deserves access to these fundamental rights. Do you have a health care story? Are you homeless and want to tell your story? Are you a college student struggling with student debt? We want to hear from you. There are several ways you can contact AFP including our website at Ashlandfreepress.wordpress.com, via email at ashlandfreepress@activist.com or call the AFP hotline at 541-622-9483. We also want to say thank you to those who have financially contributed to help keep us in print. We couldn’t do this without your help and readers who see the value of AFP and want to be a part of that can send donations to Ashland Free Press 258 A Street #1-20, Ashland, OR 97520.

And finally, we’ll let the late, great Utah Phillips have the last words. “The big system can be pretty overwhelming. We know that we can’t beat them by competing with them. What we can do is build small systems where we live and work that serve our needs as we define us and not as they’re defined for us. The big boys in their shining armor are up there on castle walls hurling their thunderbolts. We’re the ants patiently carrying sand a grain at a time from under the castle wall. We work from the bottom up. The knights up there don’t see the ants and don’t know what we’re doing. They’ll figure it out only when the wall begins to fall. It takes time and quiet persistence. Always remember this: They fight with money and we resist with time, and they’re going to run out of money before we run out of time”



# Dear Student Activists...

By Vanessa Houk

Dear student activists, Our actions create ripples that affect other people and while I know that some of you have taken flack for protesting in Washington DC at Sallie Mae’s offices, I want you to know how much I personally appreciated you for standing up against the terrible greed in the college loan industry. More than three hundred of you showed up and thirty six of you were arrested for asking Sallie Mae to forgive student debt and to stop the practice of lobbying. You asked Sallie Mae to pay their fair share of taxes. How much do they pay in federal income taxes? I don’t think I’m going out on a limb here by saying that I bet they pay nothing. Nada. Zilch.

The average student graduates with \$25,000 in student debt. *Twenty-five grand.* That’s a big burden to carry while beginning a career.

When my oldest daughter was entering sixth grade we started hyping up the benefits of a college degree. Back then I still believed that if you worked hard enough and were good at what you most wanted to do, doors would open. I thought

that universities would fight to get the best and the brightest and that is what I see when I look at my daughter who is now just weeks away from graduating at the top of her class at Ashland High. I couldn’t have foreseen the depth of the fall out of the economic recession or that there would be a 70% increase in college enrollment since 2009 (Labor Department figure), so that even with grants and scholarships, she is likely to follow that average. I worry about that. When our brightest young people’s opportunities are stifled by corporate greed, I think we have a moral obligation to stand up to that. If we don’t, what are we doing to our future work force? What are we doing to our most creative thinkers and dreamers? If we create barriers to higher education we will all suffer for it. We will all be affected by the ripples of those actions.

On a typical day my mind would gnaw on a thought like that and would not let go, but tonight I am comforted by the thought that there are hundreds of you who see the point of calling out a CEO and demanding change.

Thank you for having the courage to step up.

# Why we celebrate MAY DAY!

In 1886, when the typical work day was 10, 12 or even 14 hours long and joblessness was rife, the demand for a work day limited to eight hours at decent wages was viewed as dangerously radical. The eight-hour-day movement was spearheaded by two organizations, the craft-dominated Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (the forerunner of the American Federation of Labor) and the Knights of Labor.

An 1884 proclamation from the Federation pledged that “eight hours shall constitute a legal day’s labor from and after May 1, 1886.” Nationwide, anywhere from 150,000 to 500,000 workers - the number is in dispute - answered the call, though the epicenter of the strike effort was indisputably Chicago.

The eight-hour day finally became a reality only in 1938, when the New Deal’s Fair Labor Standards Act made it a legal day’s work throughout the nation. May 1 was adopted as a holiday internationally in 1890. May 1 was revived as a day to mark worker rights in the United States in 2006, when

immigrant workers participated in giant demonstrations on that day in New York and Los Angeles in their fight for immigration reform and a path to citizenship. Uniting the twin fights for worker and immigrant rights that trace back to the birth of May Day, rallies protest attacks on public-service workers, long-term unemployment, outsourcing and the shift of jobs overseas, and anti-immigrant attacks and mass deportations.



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# Cuba Controversy


Bt Mary Ann Jones

What happened to make trade and travel so difficult between Cuba and the US, only ninety miles apart? The US has had its eye on Cuba for over two centuries, starting with Thomas Jefferson in 1808. Though Spain was permitted to continue controlling Cuba until 1898, Cuba and the US had become major trading partners. By the 1890's US business interests owned most of the sugar, electrical, telephone, railroad, mining, oil refining and cattle ranching enterprises in Cuba and dictated the course of Cuba's economy.

A very few Cubans lived in outrageous luxury, and there was a small middle class. However, 80 to 90 percent of Cubans survived in huts with thatched roofs and mud floors, lacking electricity, plumbing, medical care, schooling, and adequate nourishment. Under the control of US financial interests from 1902 onward, Cuba endured a time of enormous corruption. Organized crime flourished, and the powerful few regularly sent millions of dollars to overseas investments and banks.

The success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 opened a completely new chapter for Cuba. The wellbeing of ordinary Cubans was the goal of the new government, and education, medical care, housing and jobs were its priorities. The US could

**Ashland Free Press reporter Karen Jeffery is in Cuba. Here is a first-hand report...**



Just back from the sprawling beauty of Vinales Valley, and Havana feels like an old friend...city on the bay, where we spent a week, exploring the neighborhoods, shooting historic buildings and old cars, enjoying the music in every venue and on every street corner, dancing in the parks and squares. The habeneros are sweet, seem happy. We begin to wind down from our busy lives...

After one more evening of mohitos and lobster, yesterday we took the overnight French train to Santiago at the other end of the island. We're all happy and well...and wondering if-when we'll find another connection.

not tolerate Cuba's defiance and its new, independent course, however, and a severe economic blockade was imposed.

The cornerstones of the blockade are the Trading with the Enemy Act (1917), the Torricelli Act (1992), and the Helms-Burton Act (1996). Together, these laws not only prevent US citizens and companies from freely trading with Cuba, but they impose severe fines on any foreign company that trades with or has financial dealings with Cuba, if that company also trades with the US or has a subsidiary here. Foreign companies have been fined almost every year, sometimes as much as hundreds of millions of dollars. For fifty years the blockade has cost Cuba hundreds of millions, perhaps billions, of dollars by making Cuba's trade and financial transactions with other countries more difficult and expensive.

The blockade hurts our country as well. Cuban scientists have developed significant medications for hepatitis and for diabetes, for example, but our government will not admit them. Well-known Cuban musicians have been prevented from coming to the US and fulfilling scheduled concert tours.

The US began a systematic undeclared war against the new government of Cuba. Terrorist actions organized in the US multiplied, with the support of the CIA. Dozens of attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro have been carried out. Cuba's mission at the United Nations has been bombed repeatedly. Biological warfare has been carried out against sugar cane fields, tobacco, rice, and African swine fever was introduced, necessitating the slaughter of half a million pigs. Dengue fever was introduced into the population, infecting more than 300,000 Cubans and leading to 158 deaths.

In order to discover what future terrorism was being planned, Cuba sent five men to Miami in 1998 to infiltrate anti-Cuban groups. When their findings were presented to the US government, our country responded by arresting the five Cubans! Legal experts agree that their trial was deeply flawed. Known world-wide as the Cuban Five, they have been unjustly imprisoned for thirteen years.

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**20th Annual Pastors for Peace Cuba Caravan Coming Soon**

This project of friendship and solidarity with the Cuban people provides a unique opportunity to experience Cuba and to discover what life is like in our neighbor nation. For more information visit: [www.ifcnews.org](http://www.ifcnews.org)

# Earth Day Occupied



Photo via Occupy Medford

On Earth Day 2012, members of the local Occupy movements marched along Hwy 99 from Ashland and Medford to the Talent Community Center for a Rogue Valley General Assembly.

During the trek to Talent, dozens of trash bags were filled along the way. Over 35 members of Occupy Medford and Occupy Ashland gathered for the assembly. New York labor singer and songwriter George Mann stopped in to perform for the group.

Occupy Medford reports: "We'd like to thank

Barely Used Beds for the water and snacks, they helped us keep going and in fact we're certain the cool waters of the oasis saved one of our members from heat exhaustion! We'd like to thank Talent Tattoo Gallery for the gloves and Downtown Coffee for our water bottles and trash bags! We'd also like to thank the Medford Police Department for escorting our group while in Medford City limits, we felt much safer with you slowing drivers with your mere presence! Thank you!"

# Taking Back My Home: Amanda's Story

viaProject REconomy

My name is Amanda. I am a twenty six year old single mom of a three-year-old boy. He is my world. However, the story doesn't start there. It all began back in 2006 when I bought my first home with my husband. To us it was the dream house, perfect for him and I, our 3 dogs and a cat.

I lost the house in a divorce several years later. I didn't want to give it up, I just couldn't afford the house on my own. Like many in this economy I've struggled with layoffs, finding new work, and having to rely at times on food stamps and stay with other families. The divorce agreement stated that he was to keep up on the payments and take my name off of it. A year later when I went to buy a car the dealership told me I needed to put money down in order to purchase the car. I thought I still had near perfect credit, but it had gone from 754 to 545 in one year. What?! I was furious and confused. Turns out my ex-husband had stopped making payments on the house and couldn't get my name off unless he refinanced or bought me out. Either way it was a no go. I felt like I was stuck with the situation and had no idea how to take back control over my credit. But it kept getting worse, every time I went to rent a place my credit score affected my costs to move in. I still had two mortgages on my credit. For several years I didn't know who to call, or what to do to get the mortgage off my credit. To me credit was everything

**Getting some answers**

Talking with the REconomy team about my house they told me that I did still own rights to the home and they confirmed that it was still on my credit. They did a little research and told me to contact my ex-husband to see if the house was empty, when the last payment was made, if he had filed for modifications, and if he would be willing to sign the deed back over to me. I found out that no payments had been made since August 2011, he had filed for several modifications and been denied every time. He signed the deed back over to me in February 2012.

**Facing the Bank**

That night around 5pm I was sitting in the driveway waiting for my furniture to come and a friend to help with the locks. A car pulled up in the driveway and a guy got out. He asked me who I was and I responded by asking who he was. He informed me that he was there to fix the locks, clean and prepare the home for foreclosure. I told him he was trespassing and that he needed to check with the courts. He asked

me if I was the owner, and I replied yes. I asked him if he wanted the locks or if we should just throw them away. He told me to hang on a minute and got back into his car to make a call. I got back into my car and made my own call to Project REconomy. The two amazing people on the other end cheered me on for holding my ground. I felt untouchable. That was a scary moment, I can see why people give up. I am lucky enough to have the support of the Project REconomy team who have experienced situations similar to mine.

**Taking Back Control**

After about five minutes the guy got out of his car and walked toward me. I asked him for his business card and he claimed he didn't have one. I then asked him for his name and phone number and he said that he "didn't give that information out." I proceeded to write down his license plate number. I hope that you are picturing this. At that moment I stood my ground and became a strong, independent mother and homeowner. I stated "you won't give me your information, you have trespassed, and now you won't give me my keys." He suddenly became more cooperative. He told me the locks were the same as before and should be in a drawer inside. We moved to the door to take the locks off and I asked him if he was the guy that got paid five bucks to do this. He said no, so I responded with "Oh, so you get ten?" He claimed that wasn't getting any money for doing this. I asked him who he worked for and I have never seen a more concerned, frightened grown man in my whole life. He got flustered and turned red in the face, blurting out "Nation Star" as he walked, almost running, out of the yard to his car.

**Home**

February 24, 2012 my son and I woke up in our house. Looking around and then into my son's eyes was one of the best moments of my life. We have a long road ahead of us, but I am confident we're going to do great. I found some solutions, took back control and stood my ground. I hope that my story can inspire others who are fighting foreclosure, whatever your situation.

**Project REconomy** is dedicated to creating an economy that works for everyone. Find out about their work at: [www.projectreconomy.org](http://www.projectreconomy.org)

*I'll see you social consciousness and I'll raise you direct action.*

# Library Parking Woes

By Vanessa Houk

Readers might recall that at the beginning of the year the parking lot adjacent to the Medford Library became a "pay lot" managed by Diamond Parking. Just a few days after those changes went into effect I parked in that lot without paying. I didn't do that on purpose or anything, I simply did not notice the small signs in the lot (signs have improved since then) and while I remembered reading that parking changes were going into effect, I also thought that the first hour of parking was supposed to be free. I was surprised to walk out of the library about 25 minutes later and find a \$25 ticket on my car.

Just a friendly note of caution: only a few select spaces in the first row in front of the building are free for the first hour. The rest of the lot requires either a parking permit or a "pay by license" parking pass which you can get from the machine on the sidewalk near the library.

After I spent a few days stewing over my bad luck, I chose to pay the fine and fight the ticket. Last week

I had my half hour in court and watched as about 20 people were called by the judge. About half of us were there and the three or four people who spoke before me had also parked in that same lot and were challenging the fine. The judge said that he was educating people one at a time about Diamond Parking's practices and reduced each fine to \$15. He offered each of us a brochure that lists free parking spots in downtown Medford and asked several people if they were still using the library. From that very unscientific poll I got the impression that fines levied by that private company (Diamond) in a publicly funded space such as a library will keep some people from using those resources.

To do my part to keep that from happening to you, I offer the following: There are one-three hour free parking spaces on downtown streets and Mid-dleford and Evergreen Parking Garages offer 3-hours of free parking.

Libraries are sacred places, do not let parking woes keep you from using them.

# Beyond Deficit Reduction : The Bigger Picture

By Andy Seles

At his recent "town hall" meeting in Medford congressman Greg Walden, like most conservatives, narrowly focused on the deficit, the supposed non-sustainability of Medicare and Social Security (which currently sports a \$2.6 trillion surplus...if they would only stop raiding it) but totally ignored the decision by the 2010 Congress that extended for two years the Bush tax cuts on the wealthiest Americans. That refusal to raise the tax rate on millionaires required an additional \$50 billion in deficit spending. In addition, the payroll tax holiday was extended for workers, necessitating, for the very first time, money coming out of Treasury to fund the Social Security shortfall. At that time Senator Bernie Sanders said: "Arch Social Security hater Peter Ferrara once told me that funding it with general revenues was part of his plan to destroy it by converting Social Security into a welfare program rather than an earned benefit."(Sanders, 155) If Treasury (general fund) has to cover your Social Security Insurance (remember, that's what it is...insurance) it becomes something funded by ALL taxpayers, not just an earned benefit taken out of workers' paychecks, i.e., it becomes a set up for being called "welfare." Nice chess move by the Republicans.

While Mr. Walden decried our dependence on Chinese support of our debt and our lack of jobs here in Oregon, he seemed incapable of connecting the dots between the two. Or maybe he didn't want to.

Mr. Walden told us that "globalization is here to stay," and yet that we need to "grow our way" out of our economic recession. I've heard President Obama promote the same oxymoronic statement. That can be quite a challenge considering that the middle class has essentially tapped-out its home equity and that we have become a "service economy" whose manufacturing capability, has long since been, ironically, outsourced to the country Mr. Walden most fears militarily...China.

Mr. Walden's exclusive focus on debt rather than corporate tax evaders belies the conservative penchant for "blaming the victim," abetted by the uninformed "WhatsTheMatterWithKansas" voting block that shows up for their candidates. These Ayn Rander types regularly confuse, if not conflate, unregulated capitalism with democracy as if they were one and the same. At the Medford meeting, for example, one individual angrily accused a young woman (who had the nerve to suggest that big multi-national companies like Wal-Mart might be part of the problem) of being a "communist."

"Get off Wal-Mart's back," he shouted, perhaps grateful for the opportunity to work as a wage slave for the six Waltons who are worth an estimated 93 billion dollars (equal to the total wealth of the bottom 30 % of American families). His was the angry face of the true believer in unbridled, unregulated capitalism...perhaps not unlike many of us, an unwitting sponsor of a race to the bottom, where the dollar is treated best. And that place is China, where the average wage is 40-60 cents an hour ("How Much Do Chinese Workers Make?"). As the middle class squeeze continues, more and more of us are eager to enter that race, grateful if we live in a "right to work" state, away from those pesky unions to which a miniscule 13% of our

decimated work force belong. Caterpillar recently moved its manufacturing from Canada, where its workers were earning \$30 an hour, to the "right to work state" of Indiana where its workers will be getting \$12.50 to \$18/hour. In the race to the bottom the writing is on the wall. Job-eliminating technology in tandem with such wage competition ensures that most of us will, in the not-to-distant future, get roughly the same wage across national borders, collateral damage, if you will, of Thomas Friedman's Pollyannaish flat world. That wage for labor in manufacturing, not taking into account a rising wage in China, is estimated to be \$1.50 an hour

Corporate-owned media and politicians in both parties try to distract us with their Washington kabuki, ignoring this "elephant in the room." That elephant goes by several names: "the "New World Order," "the new normal," "neo-liberalism," "objectivism," "social Darwinism," to name a few. As long as the top corporations that benefit from globalization can buy politicians from both political parties, any discussion of the New World Order will be avoided like the plague, even as candidates pull on the heartstrings of the "nation-state." Sinclair Lewis warned us, after all, that "when Fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying the cross." Don't expect the representatives in either political party to talk about their own subservience to their corporate masters any time soon.

It is time for a serious national and international discussion about how to hold corporations, both national and multi-national accountable for the quality of life of everyone, domestic and foreign. Ultimately, that translates into an honest, moral self-inventory that transcends social Darwinism.

**EDITED FOR LENGTH**

# Ashland's Proposed Rate Increases Threaten Poor

On Tuesday, May 1st, the Ashland City Council will discuss the possibility of raising water and sewer rates again.

Ashland residents have seen a steady upward trend in their water bills over the last years. These proposed rate increases come in on the heel of a four percent utility hike in October 2011, a ten percent water rate hike in May, 2011 and a six percent sewer hike in June. The current increases would be an 12.7% hike for water and another 10% for sewer.

The rate increase will come at a time when families are struggling with an over 12 percent unemployment rate and water use on the rise as the city encourages urban gardening. The 2000 Census showed that 12.5% of Ashland households are living in poverty. For these families a rate increase will force them to make hard decisions about food, shelter and utility usage.

With this rate increase, water rates are expected to double over the next 10 years as Ashland invests in water system upgrades.

The city council meeting is at 7 pm at the Ashland Council Chambers, 1175 East Main Street.

# ASHLAND FREE PRESS ELECTION 2012

## Activists and Unions Organize Tax Day Protest

As Rogue Valley taxpayers rushed to get their last minute returns mailed, postal workers, union organizers and social activists rallied on tax day to bring attention to the inequality of wealth, military overspending and the plight of workers.

Members of the Southern Oregon Area Local, American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and their community allies rallied in front of the Medford, Oregon Downtown Post Office to call on Senate leaders to save postal employee jobs. Demonstrators called on Congress to enact postal reform. Postal officials plan to begin massive cuts that would harm the American people and undermine the future of the U.S. Postal Service.

Also demonstrating was Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice, members of the Southern Oregon Central Labor Council and Oregon Action with their Oregon Strong Voice campaign attempting to hold big banks and corporations accountable.

A small contingent of protesters broke off from the main group for a march on downtown Bank of America. Protesters attempted to enter and deliver a statement but was stopped by security. For a few comical minutes the bank customers were "held hostage" by our small group of rowdy revelers.



*Activists rally in front of Bank of America on tax day to protest Wall Street Greed.*

Representatives from Peace House were also at locations throughout the Rogue Valley, handing out flyers on the true taxpayer cost of our military.

## Oregon Action's Vote 2012 Civic Engagement Meeting

All voices are invited to join in a coordinated civic engagement effort for 2012. Oregon Action will be initiating a collaborative non-partisan voter registration, voter education, Get Out The Vote (GOTV) beginning on May 3 and extending to Nov 6 and beyond.

**Thursday May 3rd at 6:00 PM  
in the Woolworth Building  
33 N. Central Ave , 2nd floor conference room**

Oregon Action's mission is to involve people who are traditionally on the downside of power—low income wage earners, women, people of color and immigrants— and to strengthen individual participation in decision-making processes that affect our lives. Oregon Action believes power rests in the hands of the people. Organizing people to work together, developing leaders in our communities, and exerting that power through direct action allow us to make our demands known and hold our public lead-



ers accountable.

Some of the Get Out The Vote organizing tactics we will be focusing on this election season:

- Door to door outreach for new voters in targeted neighborhood
- Non-partisan voter registration with community businesses, social service agencies and constituencies
- Voter education about ballot measures and issues (health care for all, state bank, foreclosures, immigration rights, and JOBS.)
- Uniting students- young people, Latino voters, new voters, rural communities, women and all who are committed to empowering others for direct action.

We will have light refreshments/ snacks available. Please RSVP to rich @oregonaction.org

## Statewide Tax Protests Mark "A Stronger Oregon" Day

*By Chris Thomas for Public News Service*

Tuesday, April 17, isn't just tax-filing deadline day. It's also A Stronger Oregon Day, to be marked by statewide protests of what some see as the fundamental unfairness of the income tax system. In at least a dozen Oregon cities, protesters will hand out flyers at local post offices, ask people to fill in the tax amount they have to pay and compare it to what some major corporations paid – which is zero.

Michelle Glass is communications director for Project REconomy, a group that advocates for homeowners facing foreclosure. She says she'll be at a post office in Medford.

"What we're concerned about is that the largest, most profitable corporations and banks are paying nothing - and at the same time, doing very little to create jobs, lend to Oregon small businesses or work with families who are struggling to pay on mortgages that don't reflect current market value."

Glass says they will deliver the completed flyers to local bank branch managers.

Another focus of the protest is to make people aware of the services that could be available if state and federal governments could use some of

the tax dollars they now give up as tax loopholes.

Members of the Latino community will join other workers, students and retirees at post offices in Bend. Greg Delgado, an organizer with immigrants' rights group Causa, says their goal is to raise awareness that everyone has a part to play in improving the economy.

"It's not business as usual anymore. We are going to have to come up with some new ideas and new ways to rethink our economy and rethink how we do business - because the system that we're using now is not working for everybody. It does not work for central Oregon. It's making more people poor and driving people out of their homes. We have to change this."

Delgado says the last few years have been especially tough in central Oregon, where unemployment rates still hover two percent to five percent higher than the statewide average.

A coalition, Oregon Strong Voice, is sponsoring the Tuesday events. A list of "A Stronger Oregon Day" places and times is online at <http://bit.ly/HDRj2S>.

## Awareness Alert!

**Local Watchdog Group Issues  
Warning for Land-Use Measures  
on May Ballot**

*Via Rogue Advocates*

County ballot measures 15-110 and 15-111 have been filed for the May ballot. In the simplest terms the two bills considered together intend to essentially declare Jackson County exempt from our statewide land use planning system and to reinstate the defunct Measure 37 as the local law of the land.

If these bills pass, Jackson County will be required to pay for all claims of diminished property values resulting from resource lands zoning a la Measure 37 takings language. It would break the county's fiscal back to benefit the few since the bill includes no option of a waiver as did Measure 37. More dangerously it would also be the first step in trying to get this type of rule to fly in other counties. The ultimate goal is to undo the long standing benefits of statewide land use planning for the short term gain of the few, one county at a time. While we believe that the measures are ultimately illegal, the time wasted in court fighting this will be a drain on the public's resources.

Rogue Advocates is dedicated to cultivating livable and sustainable communities in southern Oregon's Rogue Valley region. Through advocacy, education and outreach around local land use issues, Rogue Advocates work to preserve productive rural lands and to promote vibrant urban centers.

For more information, contact Jimmy MacLeod, Rogue Advocates, a 1000 Friends of Oregon affiliate, voice 541-846-1083, fax 541-846-1251

## ALEC Exposed

**Oregon Legislators Accepting ALEC Money, Positions.**

*from Tax Fairness Oregon*

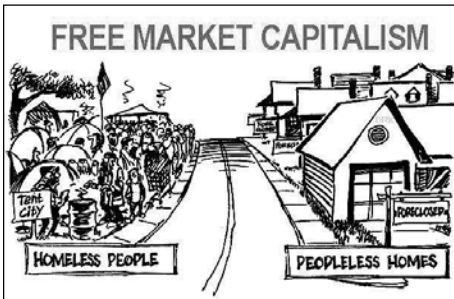
The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), has just been charged in a Whistle-blower complaint to the IRS by the nonpartisan advocacy group Common Cause for "misuse of charity laws, massive underreporting of lobbying, and obtaining improper tax breaks for corporate funders at taxpayer expense."

As of last year, ALEC was funded by over 200 corporations contributing millions of dollars annually, and included almost 2000 state legislators as paid members. As identified in a Common Cause Oregon report, American Legislative Exchange Council in Oregon: Campaign Contributions and Legislators, fourteen Oregon legislators, all Republicans, are ALEC members. The following list of names, together with their positions at ALEC, is linked from [Sourcewatch.org](http://Sourcewatch.org). All are members of the Oregon House.

### House of Representatives

- Rep. John Huffman (R-59)
- Rep. Gene Whisnant (R-53), State Chairman, International Relations Task Force member and 2011 ALEC State Legislator of the Year
- Rep. Matt Wingard (R-26)
- Rep. Tim Freeman (R-2), ALEC Energy, Environment and Agriculture TF
- Rep. Katie Eyre (Brewer) (R-29), ALEC International Relations Task Force
- Rep. Shawn Lindsay (R-30), ALEC Public Safety and Elections Task Force
- Rep. Mike McLane (R-55), ALEC Tax and Fiscal Policy Task Force
- Rep. Jason Conger (R-54), ALEC Civil Justice Task Force Member
- Rep. Matt Wand (R-49), ALEC Civil Justice Task Force Member
- Rep. Wally Hicks (R-3), ALEC Civil Justice Task Force Member
- Rep. Sal Esquivel (R-6)
- Rep. Bill Kennemer (R-39)
- Rep. Bruce Hanna (R-7)
- Rep. Kim Thatcher (R-25)

According to the New York Times, ALEC's main work is (1) write about a thousand of its own "model" pro-corporate bills annually; (2) track legislation—especially revenue bills—in all 50 states; and to (3) flag progressive bills for opposition by conservative lawmakers. ALEC bills are distributed nationally, but under the guise that they have originated locally in the various state legislatures. ALEC has boasted that about 17% of its bills are passed each year. For much more information in detail, please also visit [ALEC Exposed.org](http://ALECExposed.org).



## Senate Passes Bill to Keep Postal Service Running

**21st Century Postal Reform Act Includes  
Merkley Amendment to Save Rural Post Offices**

Last week the United States Senate passed the bipartisan 21st Century Postal Service Act, which reforms the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and puts it on a path toward solvency. The bill includes an amendment offered by Oregon's Senator Jeff Merkley and Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO) that prohibits the closure of rural post offices where such closure would have a substantial impact on small businesses, seniors' access to medication, and the economic strength of the community. Moreover, the amendment bars the closing of any post office if the next nearest post office is more than 10 road miles away.

"Today, the Senate worked in a bipartisan fashion to save the postal service America has depended on for over 200 years, and that is a major relief to seniors, small businesses, and rural communities," Merkley said. "This is not a perfect bill, but it is far better than a wave of post office and processing center closings across Oregon, which is what will happen if we do nothing. I hope the House will take up our bill without delay and send it to the President, so all the folks in Tiller, Juntura, New Pine Creek, and other communities affected by potential closures can rest easy."

The 21st Century Postal Service Act institutes many major reforms to the USPS intended to reduce its expenses, including relaxing pre-funding requirements for retiree health care benefits, returning \$11 billion in pension overpayments, and restricting excessive executive compensation.

It also puts in place minimum service standards to ensure that postal customers receive the service they require. For example, the bill puts a two year moratorium on ending six-day delivery. The USPS

would also have to maintain overnight delivery of first class mail and periodicals that originate and arrive within an area served by the same processing plant. To maintain this standard, USPS would utilize a number of regional processing centers that were previously slated for closure.

Critically, the Senate approved the Merkley-McCaskill Amendment, which protects critical rural post offices in three ways. First, it implements a one year moratorium on the closing of rural post offices. Second, it places a permanent ban on closing any rural post office that is not within 10 road miles of the next nearest post office. Third, when a post office is within 10 miles of the next nearest post office, the USPS would have to ensure that certain conditions are met, such as:

\* Postal customers must continue to receive substantially similar access to essential services, such as prescription medication and time-sensitive communications that are sent through the mail;

\* Businesses in the community must not suffer substantial economic loss, and the economic loss to the community resulting from the closure must not exceed the savings the Postal Service obtains by closing the post office; and

\* The area served by the post office must have adequate access to wired broadband Internet service.

Last year, the USPS put forward a list of 41 Oregon post offices marked for closure. Twenty-one were subsequently removed from that list leaving 20 in danger. Under the Merkley-McCaskill amendment, 11 post offices will be immediately removed from the closure list with strict conditions required to consider closure of the remaining nine.

Ashland Free Press ONLINE  
[Ashlandfreepress.wordpress.com](http://Ashlandfreepress.wordpress.com)

## Progressive Ballot Guide May 15, 2012 Ballot

Member of Congress  
(2nd District)  
Joyce Segers

Secretary of State  
Kate Brown

Attorney General  
Ellen Rosenblum

Commissioner of Labor  
Bradley Avakian

District Attorney  
(Jackson County)  
Beth Heckert

These are recommendations compiled from votes of local progressive voters. They do not imply endorsement by any organization. Recommendations were submitted by local progressives.

Ashland Free Press has accepted no funds from any candidate in this May election. The opinions expressed are our own.



# Communicating in a Conflict class series

Do you have a friend or relative who could use some support in working through a difficult relationship? Or maybe you are working on any number of community or work issues that are challenging your ability to reach agreement and move forward? Join us for the up-coming Communicating in a Conflict class series, **Monday evenings through May 14, 6:15 pm - 9:00pm in Ashland.** **Fee: \$80. Taught by Anna Cassilly. [Anna@growingpeace.com](mailto:Anna@growingpeace.com)**

## SOU Civility Series Lecture, Andrew Bacevich *The Sources of American Conduct*

7 p.m. Thursday, May 17, 2012  
in the SOU Recital Hall

After Iraq and with the U.S. mired in Afghanistan , one of the most controversial issues in America this election year is the extent of our military involvement around the world. On May 17, residents of the Rogue Valley have a unique opportunity to hear one of America 's leading military critics, best-selling author and soldier, Andrew Bacevich, share his expert point of view.

Influentia historian Professor Bacevich addresses the foreign policy and military crises facing America today. Never strident or partisan, he brings a refreshing civility and objectivity to any discussion of some of the most serious issues of our times. He is an unswerving critic of the countries military-industrial-security complex. He has deconstructed decades of disastrous foreign policies, arguing that America s global ambitions and its sense of entitlement, coupled with its myth of indestructibility, have diminished the nation both at home and in the eyes of the world. Bacevich is known for reaching across political lines and speaking blunt truth to power, regardless of who is in office.

Bacevich offers a critique of the guiding assumptions that drive American foreign policy and military strategy. Bacevich shows how successive administrations, dating back to the end of World War II have led the country on this increasingly unsustainable path. To reverse this trend we must be skeptical of easy solutions, especially those involving force and recognize the limits of power.

Andrew Bacevich is Professor of International Relations and History at Boston University . He has taught at Johns Hopkins and West Point where he graduated in 1969. He holds a Ph.D. from Princeton , served in the Vietnam War and is the best selling author of *Limits of Power* and *Washington Rules*.

### Rogue Valley New Day Network Breakfast Gathering

Friday, May 18  
8a.m. to 9:30 a.m.  
Rogue Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship  
87 Fourth St. Ashland

Build the Network  
Be the Community

## Presentation by Reza Mohajerinejad, Iranian student activist

May 21, 5-7PM, SOU Stevenson Union, Rogue River Room, Ashland, OR - Presentation by Reza Mohajerinejad, Iranian student activist. Reza helped organize the 1999 student uprisings in Iran and was imprisoned. After his release, he came to the US and founded the International Alliance of Iranian Students. He wrote LiveGeneration, a book about these struggles. Sponsored by the United Nations Club at SOU, Amnesty International at SOU, and Peace House.



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[www.kskq.org](http://www.kskq.org)

# Empty Bowls Supper: Feed Others by Enjoying a Simple Meal

Friday, May 11—5-7 p.m.  
First United Methodist Church  
Wesley Hall  
175 North Main at Laurel Street  
Ashland

*A Benefit for Food Angels, Uncle Foods Diner and ACCESS*

You are invited to a supper of delicious soup, fun, conversation and to take home a lovely handmade bowl crafted by a local potter. The bowl goes home as a gift as well as an unspoken reminder that somewhere someone's bowl is empty. **Entertainment by guitarist Ty Austin.** Surprise celebrity waiters and servers. If you would like to donate bowls or volunteer, please contact Peace House at [info@peacehouse.net](mailto:info@peacehouse.net)

## GMO focus of Happy Hour Peace Talk

Monday, May 21 from 5 to 6 p.m.  
Grilla Bites Restaurant on the Ashland plaza

Eli Dumitru, active with GMO Free Jackson County, will speak at Peace House's next Happy Hour Peace. He will explain what genetically modified organisms are, why agribusiness is pushing them, how they threaten local and organic farming, and what efforts are being made to protect growers in our valley and our state. Awareness and grassroots action are needed at this time. Come learn how you can help.

Eli will describe the effort underway to place an initiative petition on the November ballot that, if passed, would ban GMO crops in Jackson County. He will speak to how people can help in that effort, and will also have time to take questions. Eli worked with the committee that drafted the ordinance being proposed by the petition initiative.

GMO-free Jackson County was formed in late February, 2012, when Chris Hardy, a local farmer, discovered GMOs were being planted in our County, and he put out a call to the community to meet and decide how to respond to this. GMO-free Jackson County is currently an unincorporated community group of citizens, who, by May 21, will hopefully have successfully filed with the State of Oregon to become an official "Petition Committee" for this petition drive.

For more information, you can visit their website at: [www.gmofreejacksoncounty.org](http://www.gmofreejacksoncounty.org), or contact Peace House, 541-482-9625, [ruth@peacehouse.net](mailto:ruth@peacehouse.net).

## Ashland FEAST, a community foods organizing workshop

Here's a chance to bring back the Nourishing Traditions to our local food system.

Ashland Community FEAST The FEAST is an opportunity for the Ashland community to help improve our food system. What is a food system? It's the sum of all activities required to make food available to people. This includes; production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste. The Ashland FEAST is a way to:

- Build community
- Identify community food needs, resources and opportunities.
- Improve health and nutrition in Ashland community.
- Strengthen existing projects
- Launch new projects with community support and involvement Those who are interested in attending the Ashland FEAST need to register by May 9th.

To register please contact Hannah Ancel at ACCESS, 541-618-4019, or email her at: [hancel@accesshelps.org](mailto:hancel@accesshelps.org)

Saturday, May 12th 1pm to 6p at the Bellview Grange, 1050 Tolman Creek Road, Ashland, OR

## Co-Creating Community Wealth Seeding Local Sacred Economy

Sat, May 5, 7pm - 9:30pm  
Sun, May 6, 1pm - 5pm

at  
Jackson Wellsprings Community Room  
2253 Highway 99 N, Ashland

Explore, engage, and connect with others in our community who are inspired to participate in a healthier economy. We will explore our own personal relationship with wealth as well as the interpersonal and community dynamics this relationship allows and empowers. Then we will then look at what other "communities of intent" are doing to create and share local wealth. Finally we will engage our collective intelligence in identifying and making visible existing flows of community wealth and dream into what other ways we can co-create and share abundance for all in our community.

Space is limited, please RSVP to [co-wealth@visionarycommons.org](mailto:co-wealth@visionarycommons.org)

# Activist Community Calendar

Email your announcements to [ashlandfreepress@activist.com](mailto:ashlandfreepress@activist.com)  
or call the AFP Hotline, 541-622-9483.

## Peacemakers Day Camp

Peacemakers Day Camp is a five day program scheduled for July 16 –July 20, from 9 am to 3pm.



All activities offer concrete skills in peacemaking including: conflict

**Where:** Morning Sessions will be held at the Ashland United Methodist Church Campus and afternoon activities will be held at Lithia Park.

**Who:** For children who have completed grades 1 through 6. **Cost:** \$50 per child, (children bring their own lunches, snacks provided)  
Registration and more information at: [peacemakersdaycamp.wordpress.com](http://peacemakersdaycamp.wordpress.com)

## THRIVE Documentary Screenings

Meet the filmmakers May 24 & 25

THRIVE is an unconventional documentary film that lifts the veil on what's really going on in our world, offering real solutions, and empowering us with unprecedented and bold strategies for reclaiming our lives and our future. Rogue Valley Metaphysical Library & Event Center presents two special screenings of THRIVE in Ashland followed by in-person Q&A with the filmmakers Foster and Kimberly Gamble on Thursday, May 24, 7pm at Varsity Theater and Friday, May 25 7pm at Southern Oregon University, in the Stevenson Union. More details and advance tickets at [www.ThriveMovement.com](http://www.ThriveMovement.com)



## Occupy Ashland Movie Night @ Peace House! The Foreclosure Education Series



The third Friday of each month we are presenting movies concerning the current political and economic crisis in our country. Come join us for education and discussion. Movies start at 7 p.m.

May 18: Inside Job

June 15: Capitalism, a love story.

For questions or more information please contact [occupy@occupyashland.org](mailto:occupy@occupyashland.org)

## A Special Film Event: "Just One Step: The Great Peace March"



A documentary film by Cathy Zheutlin will be shown on the 26th anniversary of the March **Saturday, May 12 at 7pm** At the Havurah, 185 North Mountain Avenue, Ashland The filmmaker and one of the stars, Jonnie Zheutlin, will join us for a discussion There will also be a screening of several short Holy Rascal Films featuring Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Rabbi Rami Shapiro and Joan Borysenko. For more information call Jonnie Zheutlin (541) 482-7322

## Rural Organizing Project Organizing Conference

Saturday, May 12, Woodburn, OR

Rural Occupations from across the state will converge to share strategy, tactics, materials, and camaraderie in Woodburn during the Rural Caucus and Strategy Session. Register now for an early-bird discount! Get more meeting details by visiting [www.rop.org](http://www.rop.org).

## Please Support Ashland Free Press

Your financial support helps keep AFP in print and moves us towards expansion. Donating is easy. Checks can be made to "Ashland Free Press" to 258 A Street #1-20, Ashland, OR. You can donate via Paypal to [Jason@KSKQ.ORG](mailto:Jason@KSKQ.ORG).

Thank you to everyone who've helped support our efforts in highlighting social justice news in Southern Oregon.

Join us on Facebook at Ashland Free Press and share your content, ideas, stories and comments.

Send us your submissions via email to [ashlandfreepress@activist.com](mailto:ashlandfreepress@activist.com) or call the AFP Hotline, 541-622-9483.



## Occupy the Art

A Free Art Workshop for Kids

**Saturday, May 5, 2012  
from 2:30 PM to 4:30 PM.**

Ashland Art Center,  
357 East Main St. in Ashland

*All ages welcome with parental supervision*

## Citizens for Peace and Justice Occupy Grants Pass weekly rally on Thursdays

Demonstration on every Thursday, in Grants Pass, at 3:00 to 4:30 P.M. and on the third Saturday of every month (during the winter months) in front of the Josephine County Courthouse, 500 NW Sixth St., Grants Pass.

More info: Bring a sign that expresses how you feel about the 1% purchasing our Congress, leaving the 99% with high unemployment or under-employment, foreclosures, debt and war injuries and trauma. (Occupy Grants Pass is not a place to promote your particular candidate for president or other office.)

For details, contact Jerry Reed of Citizens for Peace and Justice at 541-474-6847 and my email is [vgr707@gmail.com](mailto:vgr707@gmail.com).

## Occupy Ashland General Assemblies Return to Downtown Plaza

With Spring's return, the Occupy Ashland General Assemblies are taking place on the Ashland Plaza on Sundays at 2 pm. For more information visit [occupyashlandoregon.org](http://occupyashlandoregon.org)

## Occupy Medford General Assembly in Alba Park

Every Saturday In Alba Park  
Medford Oregon

10 AM! NEW TIME!

[www.occupymedfordoregon.org](http://www.occupymedfordoregon.org)

## Ashland Homelessness Steering Committee

Meetings at Gresham Room in Ashland Public Library. First and Third Thursdays at 2 pm.

## Women in Black - Silent Vigils for Peace

Meet in Grants Pass, Cave Junction, Roseburg, Medford, and Ashland to stand silently for Peace.

- In Ashland, every Friday from 12:00 - 12:30 pm on the Ashland Plaza.
- In Ashland, first and third Saturdays from 11 am - 11:30 am on the Ashland Plaza.
- In Medford, every Wednesday, 12:00 to 12:30 pm in Vogel Plaza, corner of Main and Central in Medford.
- In Grants Pass, first and third Mondays from 12:00 to 12:30 p.m.next to the Post Office. Contact person Ruth Torre at 541-472-5113, email is [rmrtorre11@gmail.com](mailto:rmrtorre11@gmail.com)
- In Cave Junction, every Monday from 12:00 - 12:30 pm at the County building.
- In Roseburg, every Friday from 12:30 - 1:00 pm in front of the Fire Station on Garden Valley Boulevard.

## Move-to-Amend working group

Occupy Ashland has a Move-to-Amend working group The group meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month at 6 p.m. at the City Council chambers, located next to the Police Department. A Council meeting follows at 7 p.m. The next meeting is May 8, 2012 at 6 p.m.

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